

Translation Aids – Offerings and Sacrifices

Animals' Body Parts

An overview over the vocabulary needed for translating Ex 29 & Lev 1–7.

Peter Schmidt. 2019.

Table: Animals' body parts (in Hebrew alphabetical order)				
Sample References	Hebrew	English	Literature	Remarks
<i>References include the very first one, and the first one in Leviticus.</i>				
<i>An asterisk (*) indicates that the references are complete for the whole OT.</i>				
Ex 29:22; Lev 3:9; 7:3; 8:25; 9:19 *	אַלְיָה <i>alyā</i>	fat tail	<i>Animals Handbook</i> (s.v. Sheep, lamb, § 2.31, p. 94): “We can be fairly sure that one breed of sheep known to the Israelites was the Fat-tailed Sheep <i>Ovis laticaudata</i> and that its fatty tail is referred to in Exo 29.22; Lev 3.9; 7.3; 8.25; 9.19. ”	<i>Handbook</i> (on Lev 3:9): “the tail of the kind of sheep raised in Palestine may have contained as much as seven or more kilograms of fat and was considered a delicacy. While this kind of information is important in understanding the text, it cannot be included in the text of the translation. It may therefore be wise to give such information in a cultural footnote.”
Gen 2:21; Lev 4:11	בָּשָׂר <i>bāšār</i>	meat / flesh		
Ex 29:26; Lev 7:30	חֶזֶה <i>ḥāzeh</i>	breast	SDBH: “= upper front part of body of animal”	
Gen 4:4; Lev 3:3	חֶלֶב <i>ḥēleb</i>	suet / fat (parts)	Milgrom (on Lev 3:3f.): “Three kinds of suet are enumerated here: (1) “the <u>suet</u> that covers the entrails,” known as the caul or greater omentum, referring to the fatty membrane, at times more than an inch thick, that surrounds the intestines and therefore secures for them a proper degree of warmth; (2) “the suet that is around the entrails,”	<i>English terminology:</i> “ <u>suet</u> ” = “the hard fatty tissue about the loins and kidneys of beef, sheep, etc., used in cooking or processed to yield tallow” (dictionary.com) “ <u>tallow</u> ” = “1. the fatty tissue or suet of animals. 2. the harder fat of sheep, cattle, etc., separated by melting from the fibrous and membranous matter

			<p>known as the mesentery, the fat that covers the individual organs and is often as thick as the caul fat and, like the latter, can be easily peeled off; and (3) “the suet that is about them (the kidneys), that is on the sinews”.</p> <p>Hartley: “The phraseology ... “the fat which covers the entrails,” and ... “all the fat which is on the entrails,” is inclusive of all the fat. This language refers to the omentum, the membrane that encloses the intestines and to which the fat clings. All of these portions may be referred to solely by the term “fat.””</p>	<p>naturally mixed with it, and used to make candles, soap, etc.” (dictionary.com)</p> <p>> Stated more simply, <u>“Fat does not refer to the marbling in meat that was closely integrated with it, but rather the layers under the skin and surrounding the entrails and organs that can be easily peeled off, called “suet” in English.”</u> (Baker, p. 31)</p> <p>If the receptor language has a special word for this – like “suet” –, which is well enough known, it could be used.</p>
Ex 29:13; Lev 3:4	יִתְרֵת <i>yoteret</i>	caudate lobe / “lobe / appendage / protuberance of the liver”	Wenham, Levine, Hartley, and Milgrom agree on this identification, ruling out the alternative, “caul”.	<i>See separate paper.</i>
Ex 29:13; Lev 3:4	כֶּבֶד <i>kābēd</i>	liver		
Ex 29:13; Lev 3:4	כִּלְיָה <i>kilyâ</i>	kidney(s)		
Lev 3:4 (NASB: “the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, which is on the <u>loins</u> ”)	כֶּסֶל <i>kesel</i>	<p><i>traditionally:</i> loin</p> <p><i>more recently:</i> sinews / tendons</p>	<p>HALOT: “loin, (THAT 1:836), the fat muscles on the kidneys”.</p> <p>SDBH: “= area of the body located on both sides of the spine between the ribs and the hip; location where fat can accumulate – loin”</p> <p>Levine: “... <u>translated loins, is better rendered “sinews, tendons. ... ”.</u>”</p> <p>Milgrom: “The customary rendering “loins” has been definitively refuted by Held (1965: 401-3).”</p>	<p>“loin” (Dictionary.com): “Usually loins. the part or parts of the human body or of a quadruped animal on either side of the spinal column, between the false ribs and hipbone.”</p> <p>Hartley and Baker follow Levine too, but among the English versions only NET goes this way.</p> <p>Gesenius, 18. ed., follows Held too.¹</p>

¹ Gesenius¹⁷ had “Lende [= loin], die inneren fetten Lendenmuskeln in der Gegend der Nieren“, but Gesenius / Donner¹⁸ glosses „Sehne(n) [= sinew], Flechse(n), Muskel“.

<p>Ex 12:9; Lev 1:9</p>	<p>כַּרְע <i>kārā'</i></p>	<p>lower leg / shin</p>	<p>HALOT: “lower leg, fibula”. <i>Handbook:</i> “Its legs: the Hebrew word here has been variously understood as referring to “hind legs” (as in TEV), “shins” (NEB and NJB), or simply legs (RSV and JB). What is clear is that these parts, like the internal organs, were most likely to be unclean, both ritually and in fact. They must therefore be washed.” > Not satisfactory. Hartley translates “legs”, but notes it “is the lower leg from the knee to the foot (Dillmann, 436)”, and comments “The legs, which would be soiled by dirt and other filth, must also be cleansed. <u>כַּרְע</u> means (lit.) “to bend” and most likely refers to “the lower hind legs.” Milgrom: “shins”. “Some render it as “legs” ... or “hindlegs” (because the back legs are soiled by the excreta; Snaith 1967). Yet <u>all evidence points to the meaning “shins,” that is to say, the legs below the knees: ...</u>” [with arguments from cognate languages, and from the usage with locusts in Lev 11:21 and Amos 3:12]. Watts follows Milgrom and makes the point that <u>the “lower leg” is “in contrast to the thighs that are among the “cuts” of meat offered on the altar”</u> [cf. <i>šōq</i> below].</p>	<p><i>English terminology (all definitions from dictionary.com):</i> <u>“fibula”</u> “1. <i>Anatomy.</i> the outer and thinner of the two bones of the human leg, extending from the knee to the ankle. 2. <i>Zoology.</i> a corresponding bone, often rudimentary or ankylosed with the tibia, of the leg or hind limb of an animal.” <u>“shin”</u> “1. the front part of the leg from the knee to the ankle. 2. the lower part of the foreleg in cattle. 3. the shinbone or tibia, especially its sharp edge or front portion.” <u>“calf”</u> “the fleshy part of the back of the human leg below the knee.” --> Follow Hartley and Milgrom.</p>
			<p><i>Less helpful, or less convincing:</i> Wenham: “hind legs”, but not ruling out “shins”. Levine does not comment on NJPS (“legs”). Rendtorff is undecided and prefers “Schenkel /</p>	

			Beine” (= thigh/shank; leg). Hieke speaks of “Beine” (= legs), but mentions that the word could also be a euphemism for the genitals. THELOT: “leg bones (from knee till ankle)”. ... But the washing cannot refer to <i>only</i> the fibula (front part) or the “bones”.	
Lev 1:16 *	מְרֹאָה <i>mur’â</i>	craw / crop	SDBH: “= pouch ◀ located the gullet of a bird ▶ where food is stored in order to be digested – crop”. Milgrom argues for “entrails” instead.	So most versions. To be removed from a bird before it can be sacrificed. (“gullet” = “esophagus / throat / pharynx”.)
Lev 3:9 * (NASB: “... the entire fat tail which he shall remove close to the <u>backbone</u> , ...”)	עֲצָה <i>‘āṣeh</i>	backbone / spine	BDB: “either spine or <i>os sacrum</i> , bone close to fat-tail”. HALOT: “ coccyx of the sheep, to which is attached the fatty end of the tail”. Milgrom: “refers to the lowest bone of the spine, closest to the broad tail (see <i>Tg. Onq.</i>)”	Most versions: “close to the backbone”; NET08: “up to the end of the spine”.
Lev 1:8/12; 8:20 *	פֶּדֶר <i>peder</i>	suet / fat [/omentum] (so the English versions)	Milgrom lists some possibilities, but apparently no clear distinction from הֶלֶב <i>hēleb</i> can be established. What Gesenius / Donner have matches that: “Fett, spez. das „Fettnetz“, das die Eingeweide des Opfertieres umgibt” (= <u>fat, esp. the omentum</u> surrounding the entrails ...); with reference to Rendtorff (following some Jewish tradition and Dillmann). > Most agree on this likely, but uncertain meaning.	Handbook: “fat”, without comment. THELOT: “fat”. HALOT: “suet from the kidney”. Levine’s comments on 1:8 and 3:4 are not consistent, anatomically unclear, and the equating with the <i>yoteret</i> (see above) unconvincing. Watts like Milgrom. Hieke like Rendtorff and HALOT.
Ex 29:14 (NASB: “... its <u>refuse</u> , you shall burn with fire outside the camp ...”); Lev 4:11	פֶּרֶשׁ <i>pereš</i>	dung / faeces <i>or:</i> intestines (including their contents)	HALOT: “ <u>contents of the gut, faeces</u> ” [HALAT: “Inhalt der Gedärme, Kot”]. Gesenius / Donner: “Darm- u. Mageninhalt, Kot v. Opfertieren” (= contents of intestines and stomach, dung ...). Levine: “... the undigested contents of the stomach”.	<i>Handbook:</i> on Ex 29:14: “ And its dung refers to the contents of the stomach and intestines, and all the waste of the animal. NAB, NJB, and REB use the term “offal.” ...” on Lev 4:11: “ Its entrails, and its dung: (compare Exo

			<p>Milgrom transl. “dung”. Hartley transl. “offal” and refers to Elliger (in the Notes), suggesting that it means “the base parts, the intestines and their contents.”</p> <p>NIDOTTE: “offal, contents of stomach”, but without arguing pros and cons.</p> <p>“offal” = “the parts of a butchered animal that are considered inedible by human beings; carrion.” (dictionary.com)</p>	<p>29.14) the term rendered entrails in RSV has been understood by some scholars as referring rather to the heart and lungs, and the one translated dung to mean “intestines.” <u>Others think that</u> the first word refers to the intestines and <u>the second to fecal matter</u> (as in RSV). ... However, the interpretation of TEV [“its internal organs, including the intestines”] is probably better in this context; but compare 1.9.”</p>
<p>(Gen 18:12); Lev 1:9 “Its <u>entrails</u>, however, and its legs he shall wash ...” Lev 3:3 “...,the fat that covers the <u>entrails</u> and all the fat that is on the <u>entrails</u>”</p>	<p>קֶרֶב <i>qereb</i></p>	<p>intestines <i>or:</i> inner organs / entrails</p>	<p>Re: Lev 1:9/13: Acc. to Levine and Milgrom, equivalent to מֵעָה <i>mē‘eh</i> ‘intestines’ (Isa 16:11) [but that word is not very precise either]; Milgrom: <u>“The term does not comprise the other internal organs, which would not be in need of washing. The purpose of washing the entrails ... is to remove the dung (see 4:11).”</u></p> <p>Hartley: “The entrails must be emptied of fluids and partially digested food in order for them to burn and so as not to defile the altar.”</p>	<p><i>qereb</i> is a broad word. NIDOTTE: “inner organs, body, inner being, mind”. It can mean “entrails”, but also “inward parts” or “inward / inside” (Gen 18:12; 25:22), even “middle” in locative phrases (cf. HALOT). It is therefore difficult to decide whether in the sacrificial contexts is means the <u>intestines in the narrower sense</u> (as might be the case in <u>Lev 1:9</u>), or the <u>entrails in the wider sense</u> (3:3 etc.?). Thus, even within Lev, translating the word in different ways might be appropriate.</p>
<p>Ex 29:22; Lev 7:32</p>	<p>שׁוֹק <i>šôq</i></p>	<p>(upper) (hind) leg / thigh</p>	<p>BDB: leg -- 1. of man, specif. lower leg, calf, disting. from thigh. 2. of sacrificial animal, specif. <u>upper leg, thigh, hind leg, portion eaten.</u></p> <p>HALOT: 1. thigh, fibula, of a person. —2. shank of an animal. [“thigh” and “shank” mixed up in translation? – orig. HALAT has “1. Schenkel, Wadenbein. —2. Keule” – as BDB.]</p> <p>TWOT: “When <i>šôq</i> refers to a man’s body it</p>	<p><i>English terminology (all definitions from dictionary.com):</i></p> <p><u>“thigh”</u> “1. the part of the lower limb in humans between the hip and the knee. 2. the corresponding part of the hind limb of other animals; the femoral region.”</p> <p><u>“fibula”</u> “the outer and thinner of</p>

			<p>designates the lower part of the leg, the shank from the knees downward. When <i>shôq</i> refers to part of an <u>animal</u>'s body it designates the <u>upper, thicker part of the leg</u>. ... The usual Hebrew word for the thigh of a person is <i>yârêk</i> ..."</p> <p>NIDOTTE (same author): "... the leg/thigh of a person ... When used of animals ... the thigh of the hind legs ...". No discussion.</p> <p><i>Handbook</i>: "...it is almost certainly the <u>upper joint of the animal's hind leg</u> that is meant. Both TEV and NEB specify "the right hind leg." ..."</p> <p>Milgrom transl. "thigh" and adds: "of the hind legs", but no discussion.</p>	<p>the two bones of the human leg, extending from the knee to the ankle."</p> <p><u>"shank"</u></p> <p>"1. the part of the lower limb in humans between the knee and the ankle; leg.</p> <p>2. a corresponding or analogous part in certain animals."</p> <p>GNTD, REB "hind leg"; CEV "upper joint of the hind leg".</p> <p>(GVV: "(hintere / Hinter-)Keule"; HFA: "Hinterschenkel".)</p> <p>I am not sure we need to reduce the meaning to the <u>upper</u> leg, but that is where most of the meat is, and it contrasts with <i>k²râ</i> (see above).</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Commentaries used (chronologically)

Wenham (NICOT, 1979)
Harrison (TOTC, 1980)
Levine (JPSTC, 1989)
Handbook on Leviticus (UBS, Péter-Contesse and Ellington, 1990)
Hartley (WBC, 1992)
Milgrom (Leviticus 1–16, AB, 1991)
Handbook on Exodus (UBS, Osborn and Hatton, 1999)
Rendtorff (Leviticus. 1. Teilband, Leviticus 1,1 – 10,20, BKAT, 2004)
Baker (Cornerstone, 2008)
Watts (Leviticus 1–10, HCOT, 2013)
Hieke (Levitikus: 1. Teilband: 1–15, HThKAT, 2014)

Dictionaries used (alphabetically)

Animals Handbook = Edward Hope: All Creatures Great and Small: Living Things in the Bible. UBS, 2005.
BDB
Gesenius / Donner = Wilhelm Gesenius: Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament. Edited by Herbert Donner. 18. ed. Springer, 2013.
HALOT
NIDOTTE
SDBH = Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew (on Paratext, UBS, 2000-2017; cf. sdbh.org)
THAT (English: TLOT)
TWOT
THELOT = Trilingual Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament (on Paratext, UBS, without year).